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ABSTRACT

In early June 1969, 55 special education and physical education teachers and experts in outdoor education met for a week at the Battle Creek Public Schools' outdoor education center, Clear Lake Camp (Michigan). The participants shared in the camping activities of children from Battle Creek classes for the physically and mentally handicapped, deaf, hard-of-hearing, blind, and partially seeing, and two classes of trainable children. Topics covered are: (1) some activities conducted during the week; (2) the role of outdoor education in teaching handicapped students; (3) notes from a nature walk with Harland Metcalf, professor of recreation education at State University of New York--Cortland; (4) an overview of programs; and (5) project organization and administration. A list of the participants, their addresses, and a bibliography are given. (NQ)

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INSTITUTE ON OUTDOOR EDUCATION FOR THE HANDICAPPED

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INSTITUTE ON OUTDOOR EDUCATION AND RECREATION FOR THE HANDICAPPED

"The children who live in wheelchairs have a right to know what sand feels like between their toes."

"Whether a child is deaf or blind, he has more than enough senses remaining to enjoy being outdoors and to profit from learning about the outdoor world, its lore, its work and its pleasure."

This philosophy and 55 people who held it---special education and physical education teachers and experts in outdoor education---converged in early June, 1969 at the time and place where outdoor education at its finest was in practice for children with mental and physical handicaps.

This was the week when children from the Battle Creek classes, for the physically handicapped, the deaf and hard-of-hearing, the blind and partially seeing, as well as two classes of trainable children were having their turn at Battle Creek Public Schools' famed outdoor education center, Clear Lake Camp. The children, their teachers and the experienced Clear Lake staff went about their program of nature walks, crafts and recreation with the 37 participants and 18 staff members of the Institute sharing their dining room and their camping activities.

YOU CAN'T CATCH A FISH VICARIOUSLY

"There is no separate content in outdoor education," said Julian W. Smith, Director of the Institute. "It's a big umbrella that covers all those activities and interests that can take place outdoors."

The handicapped have to be given special opportunities for activities in the out of doors; they have missed so many of the taken-for-granted experiences of growing up. Reading or seeing pictures of fishing does not replace the moment a boy becomes a fisherman. You can't catch a fish vicariously. People who teach the skills used in the outdoors have the best opportunity in all education to apply the the rules of learning. The skill taught gets immediate use, immediate success, immediate participation and immediate ego enhancement.

There are many ways to compensate for handicaps with adaptive equipment and techniques. Some of the country's finest marksmen pull triggers with artifical hands or shoot from wheel chairs.

Inclement weather and the inability to spend full time in camp don't really stop the person with outdoor skills and enthusiasm. Air rifle marksmanship, plant identification, weather observation, as well as all the nature related arts and crafts, can all be practiced indoors.

People need more quality in outdoor education. Too many don't know what to do during outdoor experiences.

OUTDOOR EDUCATION

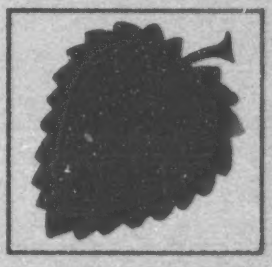
Outdoor Education, a 28 minute film available through the American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation, with Julian W. Smith as consultant, was shown. In the film and in commentary to participants he stressed:

A camp is a convenient place for outdoor education, but it is not essential. The school site or other publicly or privately owned land can be used as an outdoor laboratory which children should have a hand in develcping and maintaining. Agricultural enterprises give children the feel, the smell, the sights and sounds of working with the soil and the plants and animals nutured on it.

There is no substitute for outdoor education—it employs all the senses—a vital consideration in the education of children who have sensory deprivation.

Many schools have not instituted outdoor education programs because of a lack of well-prepared teachers. In-service training in an outdoor setting will revive what teachers learned in their college physical education courses and stimulate the development of recreational interests for their own benefit and for the education of their students.

Learning and living in the outdoors is a part of the American heritage, but it will no longer just happen. It must now be planned if we are to add a greater dimension to the education of children.



NOTES FROM A NATURE WALK WITH GOLD METCALF

Harland (Gold) Metcalf, Professor of Recreation Education, State University of New York, Cortland, taught both teachers and children:

Try the detective approach to nature. In any mystery some important clues are missing at first. The blind child is without an important clue in identifying plants, but there are others he can learn to use. Is the leaf rough or smooth? How does it smell? How does it taste?

The adventure approach brings many teachable moments. "Let's go see a beaver dam!" gives a purpose and a lot of motivation. The time to talk about what the children see and hear is that teachable moment when there is an exclamation —"Look at that!" — or a question —"What is this?"

The food getting approach to nature has both survival and gourmet aspects. Basswood bulbs, burdock, May apple or mandrake, milk week and poke berry can all be used as survival food. Some items have to be boiled in one or waters before final cooking; you have to learn which. Sumac berries make a refreshing lemonade-like beverage. Fishing is often slighted as a camping project. Catching fish leaves dozens of learning processes in its wake: how to hunt for night crawlers and other live bait, how to tie flies, make nets, where to look for and how to use the roots of hemlock, spruce, birch or basket willow to make creels and fish baskets, and the art of casting.

Physical education people tend to forget that hiking in the woods is not to establish records. Pause, listen, and look in the woods to see what areas of beauty come to you.

If the leaf arrangement is opposite, the tree is a maple or an ash. If the leaves are opposite and compound, it's an ash; opposite and simple, maple.

Learn to recognize and avoid the amanita family of mushrooms. It is distinguished by having both a cup and a ring around the stalk beneath the cap.

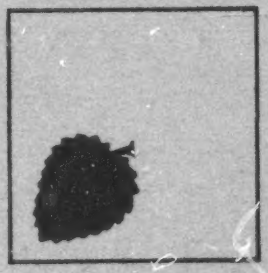
The puffball, when pure white all the way through, is a delicious, easily recognized variety. Slice through it to make sure it is solid and not an amanita in an early stage of growth. The puffball has threadlike mycelium as its base rather than the stalk that characterized other mushrooms.

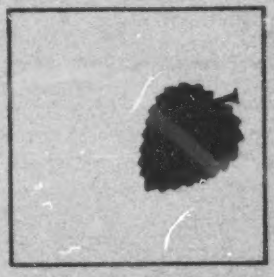
Beginning bird-watchers should take bird walks at mid-day rather than early in the morning. So many kinds of birds are out in the early hours after dawn that identification is too confusing for the novice.

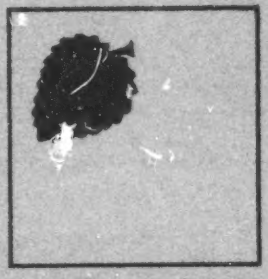
The basswood, easily spotted with its large nearly heartshaped leaves, is a valuable resource for the camper. Suckers around the main trunk, stripped of their bark, can become the wood fiber for cording that can be made into lengths as long as the camper's persistance.

Even those who believe they are not susceptible to poison ivy should learn to recognize and avoid it. Nature's antidote to poison ivy is the jewel weed, common in swampy areas. The sap from this plant rubbed on infected skin quickly dries out rash and relieves itching.

The technique for getting a nightcrawler out of his hole: "You pull; let him pull. You pull, let him pull. Pretty soon you get him out of the hole. Don't pull when he's pulling or you get only half a nightcrawler."







AN OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS

We must get out of some of the traps about outdoor education and the handicapped. As responsible professionals in this field we should

...not guide children into activities based on our own experiences and prejudices. Evaluation of the suitability of an activity for a particular child must be made on the basis of that child's abilities and interests.

...stop generalizing and grouping on the basis of handicaps. We cannot presume to know what a child can do or cannot do until he has had a reasonable chance to try out the activity with appropriate adaptations.

...stop looking at programs in terms of total integration with non-handicapped or total segregation. We must be flexible.

...quit thinking of integration as putting the handicapped person in with a group of non-handicapped. The reverse process is integration, also.

...try a regional or multi-district approach to programs.

...move into programs gradually. Try overnight camping on the school grounds as a starter. The grounds of residential institutions have been used in some programs as they develop regionally.

...shift the focus in teaching children from storing up factual knowledge to learning concepts. Concepts become a base of meaningful, useful knowledge. Concepts transfer; specific learning does not.

...find out why a program works. Was it the curriculum, the techniques or the relationships built up between teacher and learner in the particular enviornment?

The scarcity of literature on camping and outdoor activities for the handicapped doesnot mean that little is going on. The people who are doing the work in camps and programs in the United States and Canada are so busy doing the work that they have not had the time to write, make speeches or produce films for other than local use. The directory of the National Association for Retarded Children lists 500 day and 300 residential camps. The Easter Seal Society has a similar directory. Agencies, for specific handicaps, cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy and diabetes, have camp listings.

At this time we need more coordination in the field, better use of the skills of professionals and better communication to reduce the repetition of trial and error.

AN OVERVIEW OF PROGRAM

The special education category a handicapped child may occupy is not as important to his outdoor education as we often seem to think. None of the things we know about the handicapped and the outdoors applies exclusively to the handicapped. There are common activities---getting along with others, learning not to be loners---that are more important to the blind than learning to read Braille.

The Easter Seal Handicamp at Georgetown, Colorado, has for seven years given mentally handicapped children outdoor adventures they would have otherwise missed. Elementary children from emotionally disturbed and perceptually handicapped classes and the mentally handicapped of junior high school age have been included in the camping program for the past three years.

The stated purposes of the program are to provide children with educational problems concrete kinds of experience, to provide teachers with greater insight into the behavior of their pupils and to provide the opportunity for ego nourishment through real experiences of achievement. An added dividend has been the positive compensation to the parents for the stigma some feel in having children who have been placed in special education programs. Very often the child in the special education program is from an economically handicapped home. Even short distance travel is not within his family's means. The trips into the mountains, to historic sites, horseback riding, horse wrangling, swimming, fishing, target shooting, archery and overnight camping included in the Handicamp programs are "firsts" for most of the children.

PROJECT ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

"Outdoor education no longer just happens; it must be planned."

Vincent Cyphers detailed the nine months of preparation that preceded the joint pilot demonstration study by Colorado State College and School District Six, Greeley, of an outdoor education week for mentally retarded youth.

A learning theory was stated: The more senses involved, the more vivid the perceptions." Rather than covering subject matter, the demonstration was devoted to uncovering real life experiences in a meaningful, concrete way to meet the needs of the students.

"Colorado History" was selected as the theme for the field study, in which six areas of the special education curriculum were encompassed. Only activities that would contribute to the learning of health, safety, communication skills, social competence, numbers and vocational efficiencies were considered.

Methodology was developed and followed:

. . utilization of natural and community resources;
. . multi-sensory approach;
. . exploitation of opportunities for explora-

tory experiences leading to self-discovery;

- . . involvement of students in planning; emphasis of interrelationships between instructional areas;
- . . demonstration of the implications of outdoor learning experiences to educators;
- . . involvement of faculty and administrators in both outdoor and special education.

Integrated Life Experience Units were taught in the classroom for weeks preceding the trip to prepare the mentally handicapped youngsters for optimum benefit for new experiences.

The week's schedule of the Outdoor Laboratory School program, with time blocks devoted to science and math, language arts and social studies is little different from a general schedule of a modular high school program.

The actual activities that came under the heading of social studies, however, featured a trip to the Central City Opera House and a chance to hear its colorful history from the manager, a visit from a Sioux Indian family and a tour of the Glory Hole Mine and Mill.

Science included panning for gold, standing astride the Continental Divide and the first hand study of a beaver lodge.

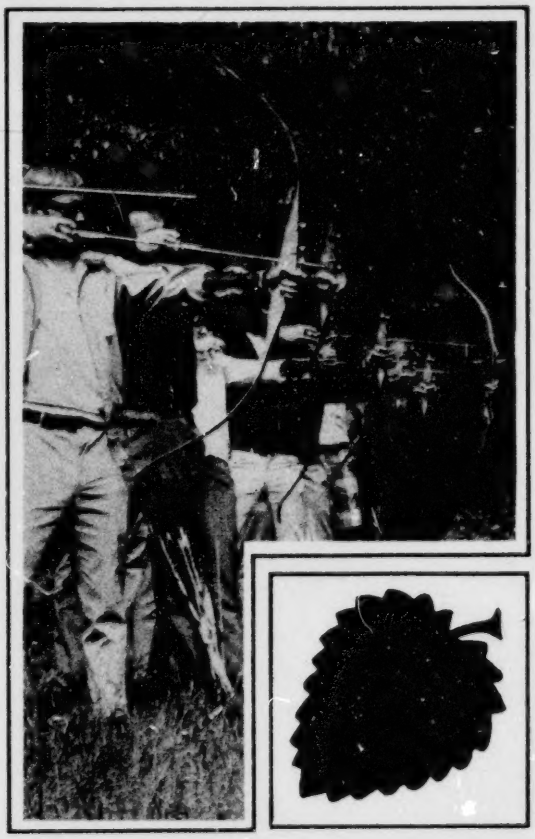
Listening to the guides, taking notes, writing cards home, asking questions and writing "thank you" notes filled, in a practical way, the time segment reserved for Language Arts.

Pre-vocational skills were exercised in the wise use of time and material, following instructions, working cooperatively and independently, depending on the activity, and in observing the kinds of work done by people encountered on the trip.

Outdoor activities such as hunter safety, creative art projects with native materials, folk singing, casting and fishing, astronomy, social dancing fit into more than one of the six selected curriculum areas and all were accomplished in the fourteen busy hours of a camp day.

Evaluation was not difficult when the boys and girls reviewed the week. "I can make my own bed now." "I found out the Continental Divide wasn't just one mountain." "The story the Indians told about Custer's Last Stand is different from the one in the books." "I notice things better now." "I'm getting along better with people now."

Exploration of the region was recommended to find other sites for future Outdoor Laboratory Schools. Church camps were suggested as possibilities. Visits to military bases, an out-of-state trip and the inclusion of a parents' visiting day are to be considered in future planning.

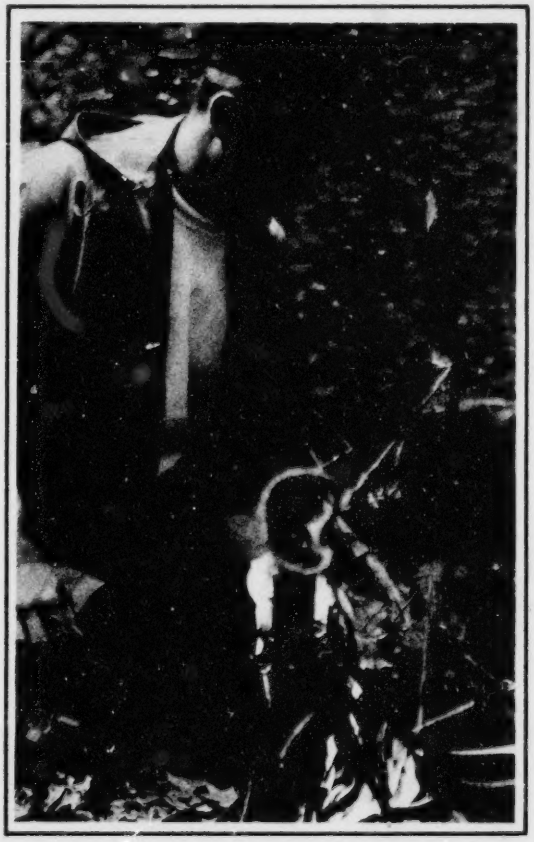


EVERYONE TRIED EVERYTHING

Ronald Bacon brought air rifles and targets to teach gun safety and marksmanship. Jaycees, he said, sponsor state and national competition in air rifle marksmanship and are a resource in assisting school programs.

The form and techniques of archery were demonstrated by Fred Schuette, who used on-the-ground targets close enough to assure archers a high ratio of first time success.

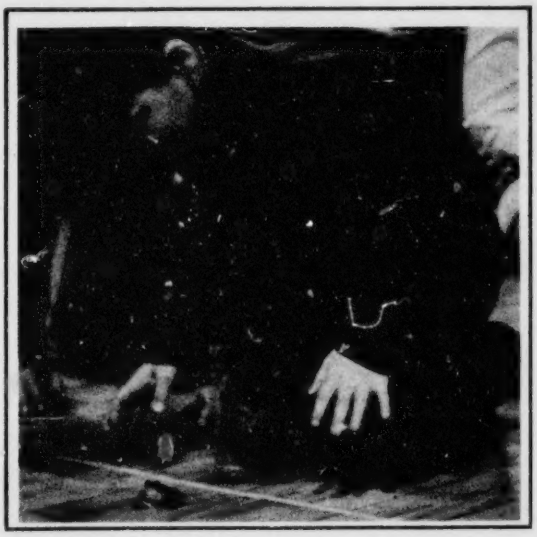
A rainy camp afternoon went unnoticed and unlamented as specialists in nature crafts taught the rudiments of sketching, cordage making, wood carving, leaf printing, fly tying.



"ANY NUMBER CAN PLAY"

Peaks of interest and participation were hit in the frog derby supervised by Kirk Wipper. "Find frogs," he said, and the camp, Institute participants and children, began a massive frog hunt. Members of four competing teams gathered in the recreation hall with their athletes waiting in an inch of water in the bottoms of covered buckets. The first event was a 20 foot distance race. Special frog-ticklers had been constructed during the afternoon to encourage the entrants to stay in lane and to continue to the finish line. A second contest determined which frog could make the longest initial leap from the starting line. The final event was an any-direction hop from the center of archery targets laid on the floor.

A water boiling contest, held for the Institute folk, put to use all they knew about starting fire from damp tender and feeding it with moist wood. The contest, with four competing teams, began with a bare fire site and large juice cans containing a cup of soapy water hidden within a 100-yard radius. Even the team that finished last felt enough sense of achievement to cheer when their can of water hit the boiling point.



NOTES FROM KIRK WIPPER

"Children are more interested in what a tree is used for and why it grows where it does than in its name. They like the Indian legends about plants. A six year old can learn from discovery that the lower branches of an evergreen are best for starting fires, but that hardwood is best for cooking."

"There is so much adventure in camping for the handicapped child because his experience has been so limited. There are risks in these adventures. Adventure has to have a purpose; we consider the purposes and calculate the risks and strike our bargain somewhere on a fine line between."

"We stay away from making shelter out of natural materials. The environment cannot stand this kind of pressure. Our boys must walk for dead or fallen sapling to support tarpaulins.

"Boys love to build forts. We have an assortment of notched logs--like giant Lincoln Log sets--in four foot, six foot, and eight foot lengths from which they have built and rebuilt a hundred forts."

"Young people are very interested in their heritage. They are curious about the methods our forefathers used to cope with their problems and how the Indian solved his. Our young people today are faced with far more severe problems than our ancestors had. Our motto is this:

" In the strengths of our forefathers we go
Not in their footsteps.
It is their stars we follow - - -
Not their dead campfires."

THINKING OUT LOUD

Panels led by Edwin Rice and Mary Blair and reaction from the floor summarized on Friday morning the reactions of participants and revealed germinating ideas for projects and programs.

Use of paraprofessionals could make outdoor education programs feasible both from economic and personnel standpoints. Community Colleges throughout the state are initiating courses to train paraprofessionals in many phases of education; they can be expected to be responsive to a demand for trained aides in out-of-door education.

Programs with financial support from several agencies have a greater chance of survival than if only one agency, the public schools, is involved.

Teachers are not organized within school systems to work cooperatively. To establish outdoor programs it will be necessary to bring together forces in the school situation that would be of most benefit to children with limitations.

Programs will have to be planned to meet the needs of individual communities just as the recreation programs we have seen this week have been tailored to meet the needs and abilities of individual children.

"The children would profit if the whole staff of a camp, or a school, got personally involved with them and their education---this means the cooks, the bus drivers, the custodians. This would mean in-service education for those who are not certificated teachers, but it would be broader experience for the children, and probably better job performance from the non-certificated staff.

"High visibility success is easily planned in the out-of-doors," said Dr. Peggy Miller. "Children have a greater stake in their own education when they participate in the planning."

"More and better music for camps, "was Dr. Julian Smith's suggestion. "I'm allergic to the over use of calisthenic songs. Good music with some esthetic qualities in the singing is much more satisfying to those who sing and those who listen."

Teachers of the special classes of campers as well as Institute participants expressed regret that there had been so little time and opportunity for meeting together.

"Undergraduates in both physical education and special education should have the opportunity to take survey courses in the other field," said Dr. Mary Blair.

Len Studebaker set off a wave of agreeing expressions---" I was skeptical about the the handicapped when I came here. I was afraid to work with them until I saw these kids do what they do."

A group photo, a final camp lunch, and goodbyes to the children, who were really the teachers, concluded the first Institute on Outdoor Education for the Handicapped.

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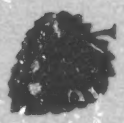

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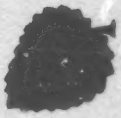

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Copper Country Intermed.
School District

JAMES A. PARIS
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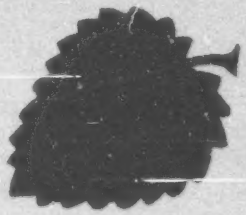

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Type I Crippled
Port Huron Area Schools

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